

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 01038 01 OF 02 231747Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 1038

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT,UR

SUBJECT: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH ROY MEDVEDEV

REF: MOSCOW 5281, APRIL 23, 1974

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR LAST NIGHT ATTENDED STAG DINNER GIVEN BY LOCAL NORWEGIAN CORRESPONDENT, WHERE DISSIDENT MARXIST PHILOSOPHER AND HISTORIAN ROY MEDVEDEV ANSWERED WHOLE RANGE OF QUESTIONS ON SOVIET UNION PUT TO HIM BY OTHER GUESTS. ALSO PRESENT WERE CORRESPONDENT FOR YUGOSLAV NEWSPAPER POLITIKA, BBC REPRESENTATIVE, NORWEGIAN DIPLOMAT, AND TIME MAGAZINE MOSCOW BUREAU CHIEF JOHN SHAW.

2. TRADE BILL REJECTION: ONLY SUBJECT ON WHICH MEDVEDEV DID NOT EXPOUND HIS VIEWS DIRECTLY AND FORCEFULLY WAS SOVIET REFUSAL TO GO ALONG WITH PROVISIONS OF TRADE BILL. HE SAID HE HAD WRITTEN ARTICLE ON THIS SUBJECT AND PREFERRED TO MAKE HIS VIEWS KNOWN IN THAT MANNER. HOWEVER, HE DID COMMENT IN PASSING THAT CONCEPT PUT FORWARD BY GEORGE MEANY AND OTHERS IN THE UNITED STATES THAT THE USSR INTERNAL SYSTEM IS DEPENDENT ON AMERICAN TRADE AND CREDITS

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 01038 01 OF 02 231747Z

TO BAIL IT OUT OF OTHERWISE IRREMEDIABLE ECONOMIC

CRISIS IS COMPLETELY WRONG. CREDITS ARE, OF COURSE, NEEDED, HE SAID. WITHOUT THEM PROGRESS WOULD BE SLOWER. BUT THE USSR, IN ANY CASE, WITH CREDITS OR WITHOUT, WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE ECONOMIC PROGRSS. THE MATERIAL WEALTH AND SIZE OF THE COUNTRY GUARANTEES THIS, MEDVEDEV SAID.

3. MEDVEDEV ON BREZHNEV: MEDVEDEV SURPRISINGLY SPOKE HIGHLY OF BREZHNEV'S UPRIGHT, STRAIGHTFORWARD CHARACTER. HE IS NOT A SCHEMER OR AN OPERATOR LIKE SHELEPIN, HE SAID. BREZHNEV WAS, ACCORDING TO MEDVEDEV, ORIGINALLY REGARDED BY HIS COLLEAGUES AS A TRANSITIONAL FIGURE. THEY PICKED HIM BECAUSE HE WAS NOT A LOVER OF POWER OR HIGH HONORS AND WAS, THEREFORE, NOT REGARDED AS A THREAT. WHEN ASKED TO EXPLAIN IN THIS CONNECTION THE GROWING BREZHNEV CULT OF PERSONALITY, MEDVEDEV SAID THAT THIS WAS NOT BREZHNEV'S DOING ALTHOUGH, OF COURSE, HE DOES NOT OPPOSE IT. BEHIND THE GROWTH OF THE CULT WAS BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL APPARATUS WHICH HAS BECOME EXTREMELY LARGE AND POWERFUL -- EVEN MORE POWERFUL THAN THE PARTY SECRETARIAT. A PLAY, FOR EXAMPLE, WHICH WAS REJECTED BY DEMICHEV, THEN PARTY SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF CULTURE, WAS PRODUCED IN MOSCOW AFTER BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL ADVISOR ON CULTURAL MATTERS REVERSED THIS DECISION. BREZHNEV'S POSITION IS COMPLETELY SECURE, MEDVEDEV SAID. HE WILL GO ON RULING AS LONG AS HE WANTS TO AND IS CAPABLE OF DOING SO. IF, FOR HEALTHREASON, HE HAS TO GIVE UP HIS POST, HE WILL NOT BE PENSIONED OFF LIKE KHRUSHCHEV, BUT WILL BE GIVEN SOME TOP HONORARY GOVERNMENT POSITION.

4. DETENTE: WHEN ASKED HOW THE REMOVAL OR RETIREMENT OF BREZHNEV WOULD AFFECT THE SOVIET POLICY OF DETENTE TOWARD THE WEST, MEDVEDEV REPLIED THAT THIS POLICY WOULD CERTAINLY CONTINUE UNDER ANYCONCEIVABLE SUCCESSOR TO BREZHNEV. REFERRING TO U.S. ELECTIONS AND THE 25TH PARTY CONGRESS, HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT BOTH THE U.S. AND THE USSR WILL HAVE INTERIM LEADERSHIPS UNTIL 1976. THEREFORE HE THOUGHT THE SOVIETS WILL BE SOMEWHAT MORE CAUTIOUS IN THIS REGARD THAN MIGHT OTHERWISE BE THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 01038 01 OF 02 231747Z

CASE. WHAT DOES NOT SEEM TO BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD IN THE WEST, HE SAID, IS THE FACT THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO HAVE COME OUT STRONGLY FOR A DETENTE POLICY. THERE MAY BE SOME WHO SECRETLY DOUBT ITS WISDOM, BUT THEY DO NOT DARE TO VOICE SUCH DOUBTS OPENLY. EVEN THE SOVIET MILITARY AND IDEOLOGISTS SUCH AS SUSLOV SUPPORT DETENTE, HE SAID. THE POLITBURO MEMBER WHO OPPOSED IT, I.E., SHELEST, WAS FORCEFULLY RETIRED

UNDER A CLOUD FOR JUST THAT REASON.

5. THE USA INSTITUTE: MEDVEDEV SAID THAT THE OBJECTIVE FACTORS DICTATE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE TO TRY AND ESTABLISH A FIRM PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES, DESPITE ANY SETBACK ON THE TRADE BILL OR ELSEWHERE. IN THIS REGARD, HE SAID THAT THE USA INSTITUTE IS VERY IMPORTANT IN THE SOVIET HIERARCHY AND THAT ITS REPORTS ARE WIDELY READ, EVEN AT TOP LEVELS OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT INSTITUTE DIRECTOR ARBATOV IS A SKILLFUL OPERATOR, IS WELL CONNECTED AND HAS DIRECT LINKS TO BREZHNEV. WHILE HE CANNOT CALL BREZHNEV ON THE PHONE DIRECTLY, HE CAN CALL ALEXANDROV WHO IN TURN WILL RELAY THE MESSAGE TO BREZHNEV.

6. THE SUCCESSION: MEDVEDEV SAID IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS STAGE TO FORESEE THE ULTIMATE SUCCESSOR TO BREZHNEV. WHILE POLITICAL MANEUVERING IS NOW GOING ON, NO CANDIDATE CAN MAKE A REAL ATTEMPT TO GAIN THE POSITION UNTIL BREZHNEV LEAVES THE SCENE. IN ANY CASE, IT IS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT THE SUCCESSOR, WHOEVER HE IS, WILL COME FROM THE RANKS OF THE POLITBURO. KOSYGIN OR KIRILENKO WOULD BE POSSIBILITIES AS LEADERS OF AN INTERIM REGIME. FOR THE ULTIMATE TOP LEADER, MEDVEDEV CONTINUED, KULAKOV IS RULED OUT BECAUSE HE IS A "NARROW SPECIALIST" IN AGRICULTURE. POLYANSKIY HAS NO STANDING. SHELEPIN IS AN INTRIGUER. GRISHIN IS IN BAD HEALTH AND DOES NOT HAVE THE ABILITY TO HANDLE THE TOP JOB. ANDROPOV IS A REAL POSSIBILITY. HE IS THE MOST INTELLIGENT MEMBER OF THE POLITBURO AND HAS BY FAR THE MOST SUBTLE MIND. (IT BECAME FAIRLY OBVIOUS AT THIS POINT THAT MEDVEDEV WAS THE SOURCE OF CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 MOSCOW 01038 01 OF 02 231747Z

THE RECENT TIME MAGAZINE STORY WHICH NAMED ANDROPOV AS BREZHNEV'S MOST LIKELY ULTIMATE SUCCESSOR.) SHCHERBITSKY, HE SAID, WAS ALSO A POSSIBILITY, AS WAS MAZUROV, BUT THE FORMER WAS TOO IDENTIFIED WITH THE UKRAINE. BOTH SHCHERBITSKY AND ANDROPOV WOULD HAVE TO MOVE TO SOME OTHER INTERIM POSITION BEFORE THEY COULD BECOME THE TOP LEADER. IN THIS REGARD, IT WILL BE MOST INTERESTING, HE SAID, TO SEE WHO WILL BE PICKED AS DEMICHEV'S SUCCESSOR AS PARTY SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF CULTURE. IF IT IS SOMEBODY LIKE ANDROPOV OR PERHAPS SHCHERBITSKY, THIS WILL BE A CLEAR SIGN THAT THEY ARE BEING GROOMED FOR HIGHER OFFICE BY THEIR COLLEAGUES.

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 01038 02 OF 02 231758Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 1038

LIMDIS

7. STABILITY: THROUGHOUT THE EVENING MEDVEDEV REVERTED MANY TIMES TO THE THEME THAT THE HALLMARK OF THE BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP PERIOD HAS BEEN STABILITY. KHRUSHCHEV WAS ESSENTIALLY REMOVED FROM OFFICE BY HIS COLLEAGUES BECAUSE NO ONE COULD BE SURE ON ANY GIVEN DAY WHAT IDEA WOULD POP INTO HIS HEAD. HE RULED BY INTUITION AND WAS CONSTANTLY CHANGING HIS MIND AND EXPERIMENTING. BREZHNEV WENT TO THE OPPOSITE EXTREME -- TO THE POINT WHERE PEOPLE WERE ONLY REMOVED FOR NOT TOEING THE LINE. SOME OFFICIALS HAVE EVEN BEEN GIVEN A HIGHER AND MORE HONORARY POSITION SUCH AS AMBASSADOR TO DENMARK OR TO AUSTRALIA, HE SAID, OR MADE MINISTER OF CULTURE IN ORDER TO GET THEM OUT OF THE WAY. BUT WHILE STABILITY WAS VERY POPULAR WITH THOSE OFFICIALS WHO ALREADY HOLD HIGH POSITIONS, AFTER TEN YEARS PEOPLE ARE TEN YEARS OLDER, THEIR CAPACITY TO HANDLE PROBLEMS HAS DECLINED, BUT THE PROBLEMS THEMSELVES HAVE MULTIPLIED. THE USSR IS CURRENTLY FACED WITH BASIC ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND MILITARY PROBLEMS AND CHANGES WILL HAVE TO BE MADE IN THE SOVIET STRUCTURE TO DEAL WITH SUCH PROBLEMS.

8. THE CHINA FACTOR/BAM: WHEN ASKED WHAT HE MEANT BY MILITARY PROBLEMS, MEDVEDEV RESPONDED THAT AFTER THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 01038 02 OF 02 231758Z

1969 BORDER FIGHTING WITH CHINA, IT BECAME CRYSTAL-CLEAR TO "EVERY LITERATE SOVIET CITIZEN" THAT A NEW RAILROAD WILL HAVE TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN SIBERIA. THIS IS A MILITARY PROBLEM, HE SAID. THE RAILROAD WILL COST BILLIONS OF RUBLES. IF THE BILLIONS OF RUBLES THAT WE SPENT ON THE TANKS WHICH ARE NOW IN ISRAELI HANDS HAD BEEN APPLIED TO CONSTRUCTION, THE RAILROAD WOULD NOW BE SEVERAL HUNDRED KILOMETERS FARTHER ALONG THAN IT IS AT PRESENT.

9. CONDEMNATION OF SOVIET FOREIGN AID: MEDVEDEV SEVERAL TIMES ALLUDED TO THE STRONG FEELING ON THE PART OF INFORMED SOVIETS THAT NATIONAL RESOURCES SHOULD BE USED AT HOME AND NOT WASTED ABROAD, PARTICULARLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST WHERE THE SOVIETS DERIVE NO BENEFIT FROM SUCH AID. THE KREMLIN, HE SAID, HAD RECOGNIZED THIS FACT IN ITS PROPAGANDA TREATMENT OF CUBA. WHEREAS STORIES OF SOVIET AID TO HAVANA HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN FEATURED IN THE SOVIET PRESS, NOW THE ENORMOUS AID BEING GIVEN TO CUBA IS DEFINITELY PLAYED DOWN.

10. SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN: WHEN ASKED ABOUT SAKHAROV, MEDVEDEV SAID THAT HE WAS AN IMPULSIVE MAN WHO SOMETIMES WENT FURTHER THAN HE SHOULD. HOWEVER, SAKHAROV'S POSITION WAS SECURE, HE SAID. BECAUSE OF HIS SCIENTIFIC EMINENCE HE CANNOT BE TREATED TOO HARSHLY WITHOUT ENRAGING THE SOVIET SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY. ALTHOUGH MOST SCIENTISTS DO NOT AGREE WITH SAKHAROV, THEY WOULD SEE SOVIET ACTION AGAINST HIM AS A POSSIBLE FUTURE THREAT TO THEMSELVES. IN THIS SENSE, SCIENTISTS HAD A FAR GREATER SENSE OF COOPERATION AND TEAM SPIRIT THAN DID ARTISTS AND WRITERS. SCIENTISTS ARE USED TO WORKING TOGETHER, HE SAID. IN A SECRET BALLOT MORE THAN 90 PER CENT OF THEM WOULD VOTE AGAINST GOVERNMENTAL ACTION TO SQUELCH SAKHAROV. ON THE OTHER HAND, MORE THAN 90 PER CENT OF THE MEMBERS OF THE WRITERS UNION, EVEN IN A SECRET BALLOT, WOULD HAVE APPROVED THE EXILING OF SOLZHENITSYN, WHO IS A GREAT WRITER BUT WHO WANTS TO BRING BACK THE MONARCHY, HE SAID.

11. THE SUNDAY ART MASSACRE: WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 01038 02 OF 02 231758Z

IZMAILOVO EXHIBITION OF UNOFFICIAL ART WHICH HAD BEEN CLUMSILY BROKEN UP BY PARTY OFFICIALS IN SEPTEMBER, MEDVEDEV COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS COMPLETELY THE WORK OF YAGODKIN, THE MOSCOW IDEOLOGICAL CHIEF WHO HAS IMPORTANT

CONNECTIONS TO SUSLOV. BORIS CHAPLIN, THE RAYKOM PARTY SECRETARY OF THAT REGION WHO RECEIVED BLAME FOR THIS INCIDENT IN THE WESTERN PRESS, REALLY HAD LITTLE OR NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. HE WAS ONLY CARRYING OUT ORDERS. IN FACT, CHAPLIN WAS A VERY APPEALING (SIMPATICHNIY) MAN AND BY FAR THE MOST HIGHLY THOUGHT OF RAYKOM FIRST SECRETARY IN THE MOSCOW REGION. CHAPLIN HAS CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH INTELLECTUALS IN VARIOUS FIELDS AND IS WELL THOUGHT OF BY THEM, MEDVEDEV SAID. FURTHERMORE, HIS APPOINTMENT AS AMBASSADOR TO HANOI HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS INCIDENT. THAT ASSIGNMENT HAD BEEN MADE SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE. CHAPLIN, WHO IS THE SON OF A WELL-KNOWN COMINTERN OFFICIAL WHO WAS SHOT IN THE 1930S, WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS FIELD AFTER HE LEAVES HANOI, MEDVEDEV ADDED.

12. THE FUTURE OF THE USSR: MEDVEDEV IS AN OPTIMIST REGARDING THE FUTURE OF SOVIET SOCIETY. REVERSION BACK TO STALINISM IS IMPOSSIBLE, HE SAID. NONE OF THE CZARS THAT SUCCEEDED IVAN THE TERRIBLE WERE ABLE TO DUPLICATE HIS RUTHLESS METHODS, NOT EVEN PETER THE GREAT. THE SAME WILL BE TRUE FOR STALIN. HE WAS A ONE-TIME PHENOMENON. THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THE USSR, GIVEN ANY KIND OF STABLE RULE, WILL CONTINUE TO PROSPER. THE ONLY REAL QUESTION REMAINS THE RATE OF SUCH IMPROVEMENT. THE SOCIETY MUST BE RATIONALIZED AND HUMANIZED, HE BELIEVES. A VITAL FACTOR IN THIS REGARD IS GIVING THE SOVIET UNION BACK ITS HISTORY. IT IS THIS TASK TO WHICH MEDVEDEV IS DEVOTING HIMSELF. IN THIS REGARD, HE CITED THE FACT THAT OF ALL OF THE SOVIET PREMIERS OF THE PAST 57 YEARS, ONLY LENIN AND KOSYGIN ARE NOW MENTIONABLE IN SOVIET HISTORY COURSES. RYKOV, STALIN, MOLOTOV, MALENKOV, BULGANIN AND KHRUSHCHEV ALL DO NOT HISTORICALLY EXIST. YOU CAN DO THAT SORT OF THING WITH FIRST SECRETARIES OF THE CPSU, HE SAID, WITHOUT TOO MANY PROBLEMS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 MOSCOW 01038 02 OF 02 231758Z

OF EXEGESIS, BUT A COUNTRY MUST HAVE PRIME MINISTERS IF IT IS TO HAVE A HISTORY AND WE HAVE NONE.

13. MEDVEDEV, WHO SPEAKS NO LANGUAGE OTHER THAN RUSSIAN, IS FORCEFUL, BRILLIANT, AND ALMOST VIBRATES WITH SUPPRESSED ENERGY. THE FACT THAT HE IS A KEEN STUDENT OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, AND EVEN MORE REMARKABLE, A SEEMINGLY TOTALLY HONEST MAN, MAKES HIM ALMOST UNIQUE AMONG SOVIETS WITH WHOM WESTERNERS HAVE CONTACT.
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